



ON TARGET

B-1 explores use of targeting pod



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Work being done at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, is ensuring that the B-1 fleet is postured for the future missions it will be tasked to carry out.

The B-1 Systems Group is designing modifications for the multi-role bomber so it can use the Sniper XR targeting pod to provide positive identification capability.

"It really became apparent in Afghanistan and Iraq that we needed this capability," said Lt. Col. George Raihala, deputy chief of the projects division at the systems group. Colonel Raihala is also a former B-1 weapon systems officer.

"In Iraq we used the B-1's ground moving target indicator radars to look for Scuds out in the western desert. The problem is our radar resolution is insufficient to positively ID a target. I would have to call in a fighter with a pod to look at it," he said.

"When you look at the B-1's tremendous capability to drop conventional weapons and you combine that with its speed and loitering ability, the addition of positive ID capability really becomes a critical factor in meeting the Chief of Staff's

objectives of reducing the F2T2EA [find, fix, track, target, engage, assess] kill chain cycle," said Eric Branum, a program manager with the B-1 Systems Group.

To provide that identification capability, engineers and program managers at Wright-Patterson are planning to configure every B-1 with the hardware and software necessary to

integrate a Sniper XR Targeting Pod with the bomber.

The aircraft and the pod will be integrated so that the pod will be cued to the B-1 radar's line of sight. When something shows up on the radar the aircrew can then feed the coordinates to the pod, pulling up a clear visual image of the target.

The image that was indistinguishable now shows what the target is, enabling positive combat identification.

"You take a capability like this and combine it with other works in progress such as the GBU-38 (500-pound JDAM)

integration and you transform the B-1 into an incredible, high-precision bomber," said Mr. Branum.

The current program has three goals: develop the START treaty compliant modifications to the hard points necessary for attaching the pylon, modify and aerodynamically qualify the pod/pylon structure for installation on the bomber, and demonstrate a limited positive identification capability.

Full-up integration of the pods on the bomber is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2009.



A fit check was performed in May 2004 at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., to ensure the Sniper XR targeting pod would mate correctly with the pylon. The targeting pod will provide the bomber with the positive identification capability becoming necessary for future missions. (AF courtesy photo)